

30 CAUSES FOR DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES ACCORDING TO WORLD MYTHOLOGY



MARE

Germanic folklore

Malicious creature that sits on people's chests while they sleep, causing nightmares



KIKIMORA

Slavic mythology

Female spirit that inhabits a house, causing disturbances; first traditional explanation for sleep paralysis



NOCTITSA

Slavic mythology

Nightmare spirit made of shadow that torments children in their sleep; smells of moss and dirt. A stone with a hole in the center wards them off.



BAKLI

Japanese mythology

Crafted from spare pieces left over after the gods created all other animals. They devour nightmares, but if not satisfied, they will consume dreams and hopes, too.



KITSUNE

Japanese mythology

Supernatural fox spirits that have the ability to manifest in the dreams of humans, tricking and controlling them



SANDMAN

Scandinavian folklore

Sprinkles magical dust into children's eyes to induce sleep and dreams. In more sinister tellings of the story, the Sandman steals the eyes of children who will not sleep.



PHOBETOR

Greek mythology

One of the Oneiroi, the personifications of dreams; appears in nightmares in the form of animals or monsters



MELINO

Greek mythology

Underworld nymph that brings night terrors and insanity to mortals by manifesting in strange forms



CAER IBORMEITH

Celtic mythology

Shape-shifting goddess of dreams, often accompanied by swans



DREAM CATCHERS

Ojibwe folklore

Asibikaashi (Spider Woman) taught the Ojibwe people how to make dream catchers in order to spread her protection. They capture nightmares and allow good dreams through.



PESANTA

Catalan folklore

Enormous dog that enters homes at night and sits on humans' chests, causing breathing difficulties and horrible nightmares



BATIBAT

Ilocano folklore

Vengeful demon that resides in trees. When a tree is felled and used as a support pole, they sit upon the chests of humans that sleep near it, causing nightmares.



LIETLIVENS

Latvian folklore

Soul of a strangled, drowned, or hanged person believed to torture the living with sleep paralysis



OGLUN ORU

Nigerian folklore

Demonic possession induces a condition of "nocturnal warfare," which includes sleep paralysis, nightmares, and other disturbances.



SUCCUBUS

Medieval folklore

Female demon that appears in dreams to seduce men. Repeated exposure leads to insanity or even death.



BAKHTAK

Pakistani folklore

Evil jinn that possesses one's body, causing sleep paralysis. It can be warded off with a ta'wiz, a locket containing Quran verses.



PANDAFECHÉ

Italian folklore

Evil witch or terrifying cat-like creature that causes sleep paralysis



PISADEIRA

Brazilian folklore

Bony, red-eyed woman who haunts those who go to bed after eating too much. She stomps on their chest and stomach, paralyzing them with fear.



JINN

Egyptian folklore

A scientific study found that 48% of those who experience sleep paralysis in Egypt believe it to be caused by a jinn attack.



TUTU

Egyptian mythology

Lion with the head of a human and the tail of a serpent, with hawk and crocodile heads projecting from his body; protects tombs and wards against demons and nightmares



BRĖKŠTA

Lithuanian mythology

Goddess of twilight that opens the doorway to dreams, protecting people from sunset to sunrise



ASTRAL TRAVEL

Ancient Hindu mythology

The Vedas, the oldest Hindu scriptures, state that during sleep, the astral soul leaves the body and travels the universe. This manifests as dreams.



MESINGW

Lenape mythology

Powerful medicine spirit that maintains the balance of nature, appearing to people in dreams



THE GREAT SPIRIT'S DREAM

Abenaki mythology

After creating the world, the Great Spirit fell asleep on the Great Turtle's back. He dreamed of bizarre creatures and woke to find that they had manifested, becoming the first animals and people.



THE OLD HAG

English folklore

Sits on the sleeper's chest, causing nightmares. When the victim wakes, they cannot breathe or move for a short time.



WENDIGO

Algonquian folklore

Some legends state that if one dreams of a Wendigo, the body becomes vulnerable to possession by the Wendigo spirit. After consuming human flesh, the body begins a grotesque transformation.



FYLGJA

Norse mythology

An animal spirit whose fate is tied to a particular human being. A person of nobility may have a bear fylgja, and a cruel person may have a wolf. If they witness the fylgja's death in a dream, it is a bad omen.



PHI AM

Thai folklore

Ghost that sits on people's chests while they sleep, causing paralysis. Lipstick dissuades them, as they do not attack women.



ALU

Sumarian mythology

Vengeful spirit that terrorizes sleeping humans, causing unconsciousness, coma, nightmares, and sleep paralysis



SVEFNTHORN

Norse mythology

A magical symbol or rune used to evoke deep, long-lasting sleep in adversaries

